

Blogposts, Ancestry's record stranglehold, book bans over the years, climate change, LGBTQ+ people, anime, and an animation industry in crisis

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In this newsletter, I'll focus on my recent blogposts, Reclaim the Records FOIA lawsuits to release public records, the Internet Archive case, Black history, Israeli bombing of Lebanon, and much more!



From the opening sequence for Sound! Euphonium season 1, which I started watching in advance of the first season finally [getting a Blu-ray release](#) in the U.S. with a dub. This series is controversial in some circles for supposedly “queerbaiting” (others disagree), but putting that aside, it is beautifully done.]

Hello everyone! Happy October! I have been relatively prolific since my last newsletter, with posts about the [sanctity of library property in fiction](#) and reality of library theft (this garnered much discussion where I posted it, more than previous posts on that forum) and my list of recently added titles [on Pop Culture Library Review](#) for August 2024. This included *The Daily Planet* library in *Superman: The Animated Series*, the dimly lit libraries in *Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated*, the personal library featured in *The Magical Revolution of the Reincarnated Princess and the Genius Young Lady* Vol. 5 (also known as *MagiRevo*), and a library scene in *Bloom Into You: Regarding Saeki Sayaka* Vol. 3 (which has clear lesbian romantic undertones, fitting with the rest of this wonderful, heartfelt, and intriguing spinoff light novel series which split from Nakatani Nio's *Bloom Into You*). I [further noted](#) a profound lack of libraries in Tom Gault's *Revenge of the Librarians*, despite the book title and stronger fictional depictions of librarians and libraries. As a reminder, since this newsletter is "too long for email," it will likely be partially cut off in your email inboxes (it exceeded Gmail's size limit), so please click on the newsletter link to read the full newsletter on Substack (or my [WordPress blog](#) in two days from now).

Additionally, I wrote about how you can never fully get the objective "truth" in archives (everyone has a certain vantage point) and related that to a scroll which is [a key part of the final section](#) of the *Nimona* animated film adaptation, which I'd highly recommend a watch. While the film does not follow the artfully put together and executed webcomic (and later graphic novel) by ND Stevenson, who is best known as the showrunner for *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, this last scene stuck with me. It connected with what I've written about before on *Wading Through the Archival Stacks* as related to "truth" from archives. It even generated some discussion from fans on the forum where I posted it.

I also discussed spies, employee files, and secrets, especially archives and record manipulation [in *Totally Spies!*](#) (not in the new season though, which can only be watched in France at present). On [another blog](#), *Packed with Packards*, I noted the connection of E.P.W. Packard, Libby, mental health, and Barbara Sapinsley's clever storytelling in Barbara Sapinsley's 1991 book, *The Private War of Mrs. Packard*. I further wrote about [the role](#) of libraries and books in *Tropical Rouge PreCure* as well. I similarly noted themes of the same kind [in *Fruits Basket \(an anime\)*](#), *Literary Link* (a webcomic), *I Want to Eat Your Pancreas* (a film), *Laid-Back Camp* (an anime), and many more. Most recently, [I wrote](#) about the power of the press, top-secret papers, and the media's obligation to "truth" in *The Post* on my blog, *Wading Through the Cultural Stacks*.

In response to [my last newsletter](#), Reclaim the Records thanked me for being someone who is “consistently and thoroughly documenting some of Ancestry’s screw-ups” and glad someone is doing “such a good real-time documentation of them.” I won’t quote any more of what they said, beyond that, but there is something public they suggested to be added to Ancestry’s list of bad acts: suing an individual genealogist, by name, in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) because he asked for copies [of public records](#), in an attempt to block handover of records to the public.

They pointed me to [their newsletter](#) with a description of this case, noting a bit more: Alec Ferretti (a member of Reclaim the Records board), part of a legal fight to get the PHMC’s digital files released to the public, all the digital images and every piece of text metadata, specifically anything “scanned or indexed by Ancestry.com under the company’s contracts with PHMC going back to 2008,” and noting that public records belong to the public, meaning that newly-made files by a third-party vendor should become public records, as noted in a contract. The newsletter describes how the Pennsylvania Office of Open Records [ruled in](#) their favor, and, in response, the PHMC sued Ferretti, and Ancestry submitted a brief *on behalf* of the archive, a gross tactic of “reverse FOIA,” with the claim that public records are “*confidential proprietary information*” [sic] and that the release would cause substantial harm to Ancestry. The case is ongoing. They noted two articles in [Spotlight PA](#) and [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#) covering this case. This isn’t much of a surprise from Ancestry, considering they shut down RootsWeb beginning in 2021 (and almost completely by 2023), despite [admitting](#) it had a “central role in creating an online genealogy community.” They had previously purchased the site [in 2000](#), but didn’t decide to shutter it *until 2021*. It still exists, but *only* in read-only form, a shell of its former self.



Improving FOIA Edit-a-thon in July 2019. Image by Avery Jensen [on Wikimedia](#). This is not directly related to the case I am describing here, but I thought it was relevant enough (as I am discussing FOIA), which is why I am including this image, to be clear.

Reclaim the Records had a victory in Maryland. Michael McCormick used the Maryland Public Information Act to pull off “an amazing open records win.” The *Washington Post* [described it](#) as “giving anyone with an internet connection access to Maryland records that were previously available only to those able to travel to Annapolis.” Maryland State Archivist Elaine Rice Bachmann countered that records *were* “always available for people to search using computers **in the archives building in Annapolis**,” but...that is the issue! I don’t disagree with her that “making records truly accessible takes more than just uploading digital images...and [that] the archives staff is dedicated to providing authoritative information needed to make sense of them” as the *Post* summarizes. But they *also* should be available online. Reclaim the Records newsletter described the release as “acquisition and publication of more than five million Maryland birth, marriage, death, and naturalization records,” which will be a clear boon for genealogists, to say the least. Reclaim the Records [thanks the MD](#)

[Archives](#) and their Director of Special Projects for “their cooperation, and we acknowledge their significant efforts in fulfilling our sizable request.”

Coming back to the case at hand, here is the argument of Ancestry’s [outrageous brief](#), which *notes* communication between PHMC and Ancestry and says *a LOT* about financial issues the archive *may* be going through, with the amount they are *paying* Ancestry itself, which the company is using to bolster their argument. Ancestry wrongly asserts the records he is requesting are confidential (they aren’t) and do not recognize that they have a monopoly of records, only significantly rivaled by FamilySearch (which they often work with). They also reveal the restricted they imposed on the PHMC.

Unsurprisingly, considering the absurdity of this brief, Ancestry claims that this record release would put them at significant financial loss, even though almost *all* of the records on their database are from public institutions (and they just concluded a huge agreement with NARA as I noted in my last newsletter). Without public records, Ancestry would be *nothing*, a completely worthless company. Basically, they say that the license agreement they concluded with PHMC imposed certain usage restrictions, not how the PHMC counsel in December 2022 informed Ancestry’s Content Acquisition Team about the “filing of the request and appeal” and said that that the agency would “handle” the appeal if an appeal was filed. Apart from Ancestry’s harping about proprietary processes to publish and index the records, and claiming posting the materials would cause them competitive and substantial harm, claiming that genealogy market has “fierce” competition, a few other facts are revealed:

- It would reportedly cost the PMHC nearly \$300,000 every year to maintain the licensed records. Whether this is accurate or not, I don’t know. It could be a completely phony baloney number.
- PHMC has the “nontransferable license to use the Licensed Materials for the benefit of its patrons or its own internal use” but could not post them on the PMHC’s website for three years after each image-set is posted online!
- If the license agreement is ended, “PHMC is *required* to return to Ancestry any Licensed Materials received”!
- Ancestry is competing with other sites like MyHeritage.com, FamilySearch.com, and FindMyPast.com (this was already known)

Doing a search on the PMHC website, I found webpages [describing](#) their partnership as digitizing family history records, like birth, death and military records *and* making them [available online](#). An October 2014 [press release](#) described it relatively similarly, stating in part: “More than seven

million Pennsylvania death records are now available online thanks to a continued collaboration between the Pennsylvania State Archives and Ancestry...It contains all of the **publicly available** death records from the Pennsylvania State Archives from 1906 until 1963.” A few years before, Ancestry.com [boasted](#) they had added “over seven million records detailing more than 300 years of Pennsylvanians’ life history spanning from 1593-1908 to its already expansive collection of Pennsylvania state records. Presented **in partnership** with the Historical Society of Pennsylvania...Ancestry.com is easing the burden of those with Pennsylvania roots who want to learn more about their family history by bringing records that were traditionally created and maintained locally, **online.**”

If this isn’t enough, in their [2023 annual impact report](#), they declare that they want to preserve records “at risk of being lost or forgotten” (including those about the Chinese Exclusion Act, Black revolutionary war soldiers, the Holocaust, and the Freedmen’s Bureau) and declare they have made, since 2021, “made more than 8.4 million records available to everyone **at no cost.**” So having records available at no cost *is* good? This goes against what they are stating in their brief, I’d venture...

Our numbers tell your story

For the past 40 years, we’ve helped people learn more about themselves by connecting them to their past so they can gain meaningful insights to impact their future.



Over 1 billion in revenue



60 billion records online



Over 25 million people in the world’s largest consumer DNA network

Perhaps it is time to request a FOIA noting the relationship between Ancestry and the PMHC, or even between the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and Ancestry (also a digitization partner of Ancestry). After all, they often boast about their archival collections, like on see page 25 of their [2022 annual impact](#) report and declare they are digitizing and making records searchable, *for free*, or “available online at no cost” (see page 20 of their [2021 annual impact report](#)). So, if they make records available so anyone can access them *without* any cost, that’s OK, but if Reclaim the Records does it, *then* it violates confidentiality? Make it make sense! After all, FamilySearch (an arm of the Mormon church) has all sorts of records available for free (all you need is an account), and that’s OK. Let us not

forget that online memorial sites such as [We Remember](#) and [Find a Grave](#), which are two of the twelve Ancestry brands have records *publicly available* and accessible online, *without* having to pay (all you need is an account).

In sum, Ancestry looks to be money-grubbing here. All the while, U.S. courts [side with Ancestry](#), like in the case about yearbook photos I mentioned earlier, claiming they weren't exploiting the photos, of the person who sued, commercially (undoubtedly *wrong*). That same judge who ruled on this case, Edmund A. Sargus, Jr. of the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of Ohio (Eastern Division), ruled [against](#) Ancestry back in April, effectively saying "class members' names and personas" were used to "to promote paid subscriptions."

Ancestry has won similar cases with [the idea it is immune](#) under Section 230 from using photographs, names, and likenesses from school yearbooks *without* permission of those inside the yearbooks, "because it didn't create the yearbook records" and isn't a "content provider" (it certainly is!). However, they did lose a case [earlier this year](#) and have to face "genetic-privacy claims of minors whose guardians submitted their DNA for analysis in court rather than before an arbitrator." So they aren't winning *all* the time.

In other news related to archives, there was an [illuminating interview with Meredith Lowe](#), who created ArchivesGig, which shares job postings related to archives. I still get daily emails from them all the time, even though most of the postings are at far-away institutions (at least for me). Even so, it is still a good resource. Apart from that, Caitlin Birch, Director of Digital Scholarship and Distinctive Collections at James Madison University Libraries, [noted](#) the continued relevance of the presidential address of SAA president Dr. Robert H. Bahmer, distinguishing "archival manager from archivist, identifies the primary threat to the archivist that the manager must protect against, and affirms the importance of both parties to the success of archival institutions. In so doing, he offered ideas about management and leadership and about who archivists are."



Kanade reads about ghost monsters in an in-game library in an episode of Bofuri: I Don't Want to Get Hurt, so I'll Max Out My Defense. He is often shown in the library during the series.

I'm moving to the next topic: libraries. The biggest news was the Internet Archive (IA) [losing their case](#) in court for the National Emergency Library. While I personally feel that IA's strategy here, with this library, was *not* a good one and could have been better implemented, this defeat will undoubtedly have a chilling effect on libraries. In my [April 2023 newsletter](#) I noted that this case, called *Hachette v. Internet Archive* for short, began around allegations that Open Library, and [the National Emergency Library](#) (I first mentioned it [here](#)), [engaged](#) in copyright infringement, with the judge, John G. Koetl, saying that IA can *still* "lend books in its collection that are in the public domain, and free to use works still covered by copyright in a way consistent with what is done on Google Books and HathiTrust", which includes indexing, snippet view, and full access for the print disabled. In other newsletters, I [noted](#) that the ramifications on IA will not as serious as some may think, while I am more critical of IA and don't fully trust their judgment as [I did](#) in the past (also see my defense of them [here](#)). I think IA made an error in *how* they shared the books and could have done it in a much better way, but I believe that if IA loses, it will have negative effects on libraries. This comes at a time that major record labels [have "sued"](#) the online library Internet Archive over thousands of old recordings."

Otherwise, *American Libraries* had [great story](#) on U.S. book bans and fight for intellectual freedom, talking about previous attempts at book banning over the years, from Thomas Morton's *New English Canaan* banned in 1637 by Massachusetts' Puritan government, likely because he, in part, "wrote critically about Puritans, their government, and their treatment of Native Americans." It later notes in 1740, the colony of South Carolina passed "the first antiliteracy law, which prohibited teaching enslaved people to write or using them as scribes" and when, in 1775, American printer Isaiah Thomas "smuggled his printing press out of Boston to Worcester, Massachusetts" to avoid prosecution for printing *The Massachusetts Spy*, a "political newspaper critical of British rule."

The article also notes the publication of *Walker's Appeal* by abolitionist and freeman David Walker in 1829, which "openly encouraged enslaved people to rebel against their oppressors." Unsurprisingly, it was banned by Southern states. Additionally, the article notes the passage of [the Comstock Act in 1873](#), which banned the U.S. Post Office from sending any material deemed obscene, lewd, lascivious, and filthy. The article rightly noted that even though portions of the Comstock law were "gutted through legal challenges, they remain on the books...[with a] potential ability to criminalize abortion providers' supply chains" if used today! Later entries note the fight over stocking certain magazines at a local library in Bartlesville, Oklahoma in 1950, a patron absurdly claiming in Bryan, Texas in 1952 that *Consumer Reports* was "a communist front and that its subscription revenue was being turned over to the Communist Party" (nothing could be further than the truth), the publication of the [Freedom to Read Statement](#) in 1953 and then-President Dwight D. Eisenhower [saying](#):

Don't join the book burners. Don't think you are going to conceal faults by concealing evidence that they ever existed. Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book, as long as that document does not offend our own ideas of decency. That should be the only censorship.

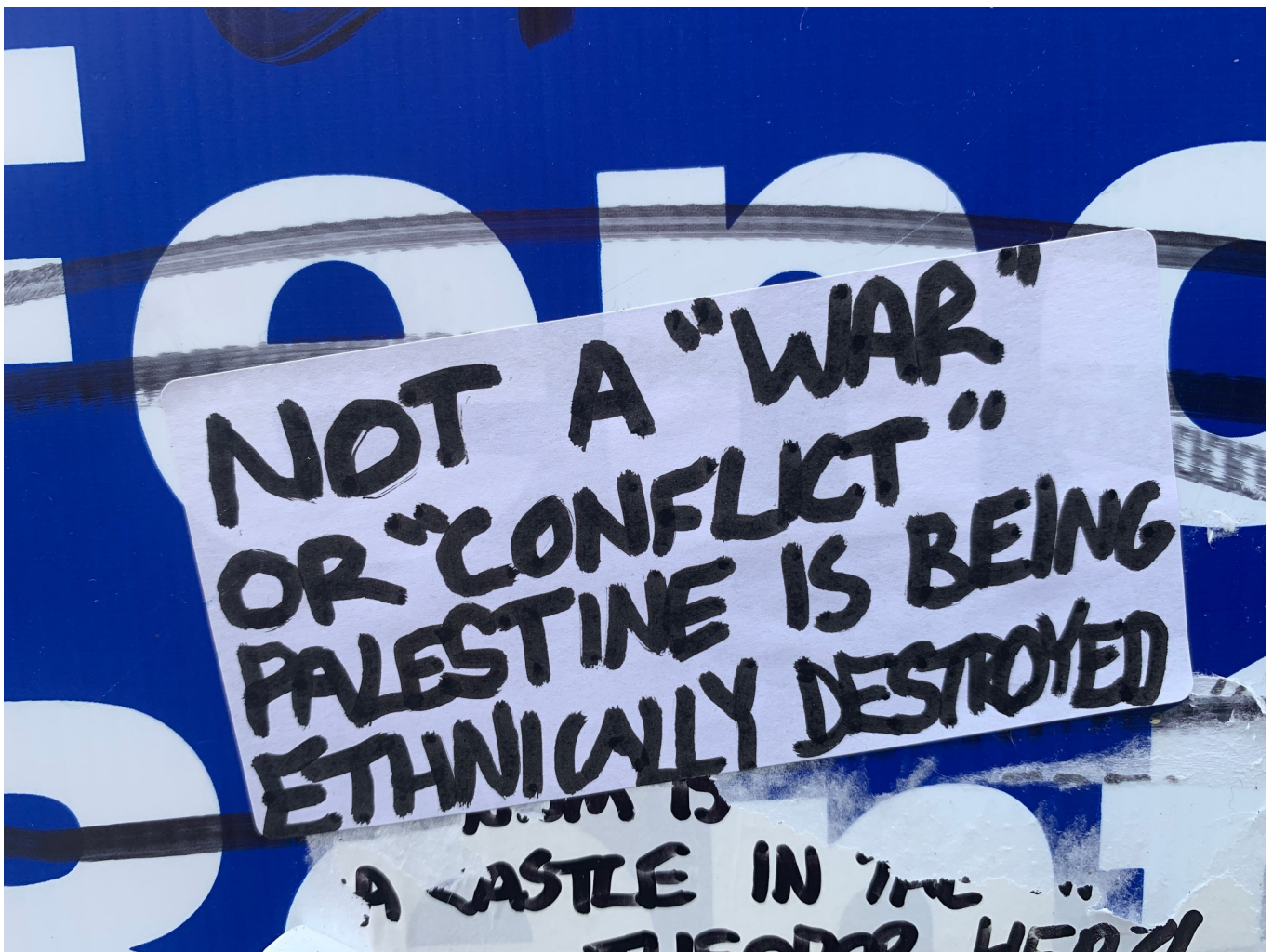
Other entries note an Alabama Senator, Edward Oswald Eddins, attacking a children's book as "integration propaganda" in 1959, with director of Alabama's Public Library Service Division [Emily Wheelock Reed](#), removing the book from general circulation but allowing "librarians to access it for their institutions by request" (barely a victory), students and parents challenging books at a library in a high school in El Camino, California for promoting satanism and witchcraft, in 1986, successful challenges to books claimed to have content "related to satanism, witchcraft, and the occult" from 1988 to 1989, and passage of the [Children's Internet Protection Act](#) (CIPA) which requires schools to "install

internet-filtering technology on their computers as a condition of receiving certain funding and discounts” in 2001.

Also noted was the removal of a children’s book entitled *And Tango Makes Three*, which “features two male penguins who form a family” beginning in 2006, an event in 2021 with an author (Jerry Craft) cancelled because a parent objected to *New Kid* but absurdly claiming the book taught critical race theory (undoubtedly false), a parental complaint which resulted in Amanda Gorman’s *The Hill We Climb* getting restricted in a Miami Lakes, Florida school, even though it *only* comprised “the eponymous poem read by Gorman at President Joe Biden’s inauguration,” which is a ridiculous reason to restrict it. What I did find interesting was one part, barely tucked in, about how the ALA’s Library War Service worked *with* the U.S. government to ban books during World War I:

During World War I, ALA’s Library War Service **sent banned-book lists** to military camp libraries on behalf of the War Department. The list included books that were considered too pacifist, pro-German, or pro-socialist, such as *England or Germany* by Frank Harris, *The Bolsheviki and World Peace* by Leon Trotsky, and *The Last Weapon* by Theodora Wilson Wilson. Camp librarians, many of them ALA volunteers, **received orders to remove and destroy** such books. One letter from ALA directed librarians to keep vigilant against objectionable materials, including publications from faith groups promoting pacifism and “so-called philanthropic societies.” It also warned that such publications might be placed on library shelves without camp librarians’ knowledge, making “constant watch necessary.”

Weirdly (or perhaps on purpose?), a reviews of the history of the ALA’s Library War Service by the [New-York Historical Society Museum & Library](#) and the [American Library Association Archives](#) (at University of Illinois) do *not* mention this censorship. The same is also the case for other reviews I found [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#). I’m not sure whether this is mentioned in [Books in the war; the romance of library war service](#), [Books for Sammies : the American Library Association and World War I](#), and [War Service of the American Library Association](#). One source does show how the ALA collaborated with the U.S. library, [briefly noting](#): “ALA-managed libraries **were transformed** into military-managed libraries after the war..these military librarians **eventually weeded** them out of the collection or otherwise **discarded** them.” Isn’t that bad?



Sticker from University of Toronto Occupy for Palestine, posted by Dr. Katherine Blouin [back in June](#)

This brings me to Gaza and Palestine. Former ALA president (her term ended in July) Emily Drabinski, writing for *Truthout*, talked about efforts by librarians [to resist](#) Israel's "efforts to destroy Palestinian cultural heritage." This is rich she would write this, considering, as I pointed out in previous newsletters, she [hadn't posted](#) anything about the Gaza Strip despite destruction of libraries and archives in Israel's brutal bombing campaign, even as the ALA Council [voted against](#) a ceasefire in January of this year. She still hasn't posted about it on her X/Twitter account to this day, despite the fact she isn't ALA president anymore! Others [noted](#) the Israeli fuel blockade as strangling Gaza, the U.S. pushing Israel to exploit offshore oil reserves [to revitalize](#) the economy in Gaza, Amazon [removing](#) pro-Palestinian merchandise after Zionists complained, and an analysis of what *really* [happened on October 7th](#).

Apart from that, there are resources [about](#) Palestinian liberation and Israel [preparing](#) for a ground assault in Lebanon (they were just waiting for an excuse to invade and kill Lebanese people,

which they are justifying by “fighting Hezbollah” when it really isn’t about that at all). The latter was written prior to the illegal invasion of Lebanon which began today. It happened in part because Israeli ~~prime minister~~ war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu realized, as [one person noted](#), “there was no way that the Democrats between now and November 5th...could do anything...[that would] restrain him.” The latter was described as “a sign” of weakening U.S. influence, despite *strong* [U.S. support](#) for the invasion. The invasion itself goes beyond the dropping of bombs, including U.S.-made bunker-buster bombs, weighing 2,000 pounds each, on a densely-populated suburb south of Lebanon’s capital city of Beirut.

Both are [inhumane](#), [illegal](#), and show Israel’s true and rogue nature. They are willing to kill *whoever* needed to “win” even if thousands die in the process (so far over 800 Lebanese have died since Israel began airstrikes on September 23rd). While this strike only, reportedly, killed about 30 people, almost 200 (if not more) were injured! Israel should get back to the negotiating table and end the conflict by withdrawing *all* their troops from Gaza, Lebanon, West Bank, and other war zones, and end their unchecked military aggression. At the same time, this rogue state can *only* be stopped once the [U.S. withdraws all support](#).

This brings me to totally different topic: genealogy and ancestry. There were articles of note about [hidden lineage](#) of ancient Japanese ancestry, how exploring ancestry [helps](#) mental health (it can also, conversely, *worsen* it), [listing](#) family history abbreviations, the [story](#) of Black women and Civil War pensions, family genealogy’s [contributions](#) to the “philosophical problem of birth” and what [one scholar](#) called “Euroamerican Genealogy Fever.” I’m not sure I’d call it that, but they have a point, considering the roots work boom, as it could be called.

This brings me to a related topic: history. One of the better articles I read recently was about [the disturbing origin](#) of the POW/MIA flag, [followed](#) by a story that sounded like something out of *Carmen Sandiego*...or a mission gone wrong, and [six myths](#) about Black history in America. The latter, in Vox, of all places, includes some of the following, which says a lot:

Enslaved people were money. Their bodies and labor were the capital that fueled the country’s founding and wealth. But **many also had money**. Enslaved people actively participated in the informal and formal market economy...Black revolutionary soldiers are usually called Black Patriots. But the term Patriot **is reserved** within revolutionary discourse to refer to the men of the 13 colonies who believed in the ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence...That’s why the term Black Patriot is a myth...**A dangerous**

myth that continues to haunt Black Americans is the belief that the government infected 600 Black men in Macon County, Alabama, with syphilis. This myth has created generations of African Americans with a healthy distrust of the American medical profession...America's medical past is steeped in racialized terror and the exploitation of Black bodies...It is well-known that African Americans faced the constant threat of ritualistic public executions by white mobs, unpunished attacks by individuals, and police brutality in Jim Crow America. But how they responded to this is a myth that persists. In an effort to find lawful ways to address such events, **some Black people** made legalistic appeals to convince police and civic leaders their rights and lives should be protected...The bodies of people of color have a pernicious history of total exploitation and criminalization in the US. Like total war, total exploitation **enlists and mobilizes** the resources of mainstream society to obliterate the resources and infrastructure of the vulnerable...One of the biggest myths about the history of Black people in America is that all were enslaved until the Emancipation Proclamation, or Juneteenth Day. In reality, free Black and Black-white biracial communities **existed** in states such as Louisiana, Maryland, Virginia, and Ohio well before abolition.

That's only an excerpt. I encourage you all to read the article I have quoted above. There are other good articles about:

- resisting Whiteness [in art history](#)
- the [colored world](#) of Charles Wilson Peale
- [dreams](#) of sushi history
- changing interpretations of Japan's Pacific War [naval demise](#)
- how anxiety about the eclipse [laid the foundation](#) for modern astronomy
- [Frida Kahlo's miscarriage](#)

Also, *Smithsonian* magazine had an article on [women trailblazers](#). This included: a woman at an operating hospital in Boston in 1890, medical student Anna Searcy in Missouri in 1897, boxing promoter Florence North in New York City in 1922, journalist Angela Ramos in Ate-Vitarte, Peru in 1929, actress Marlene Dietrich in Europe in 1945, anti-imperialist Amy Geraldine "Dinah" Stock in Manchester, England in about 1945, artist Hedda Sterne in New York City in 1951, activist Gloria Richardson in Cambridge, Maryland in 1963, athlete Kathrine Switzer in Boston, Massachusetts in

1967, and publisher Katharine Graham in New York City in 1975. The article provides more detail than this, as this listing only skims the surface of the topic.

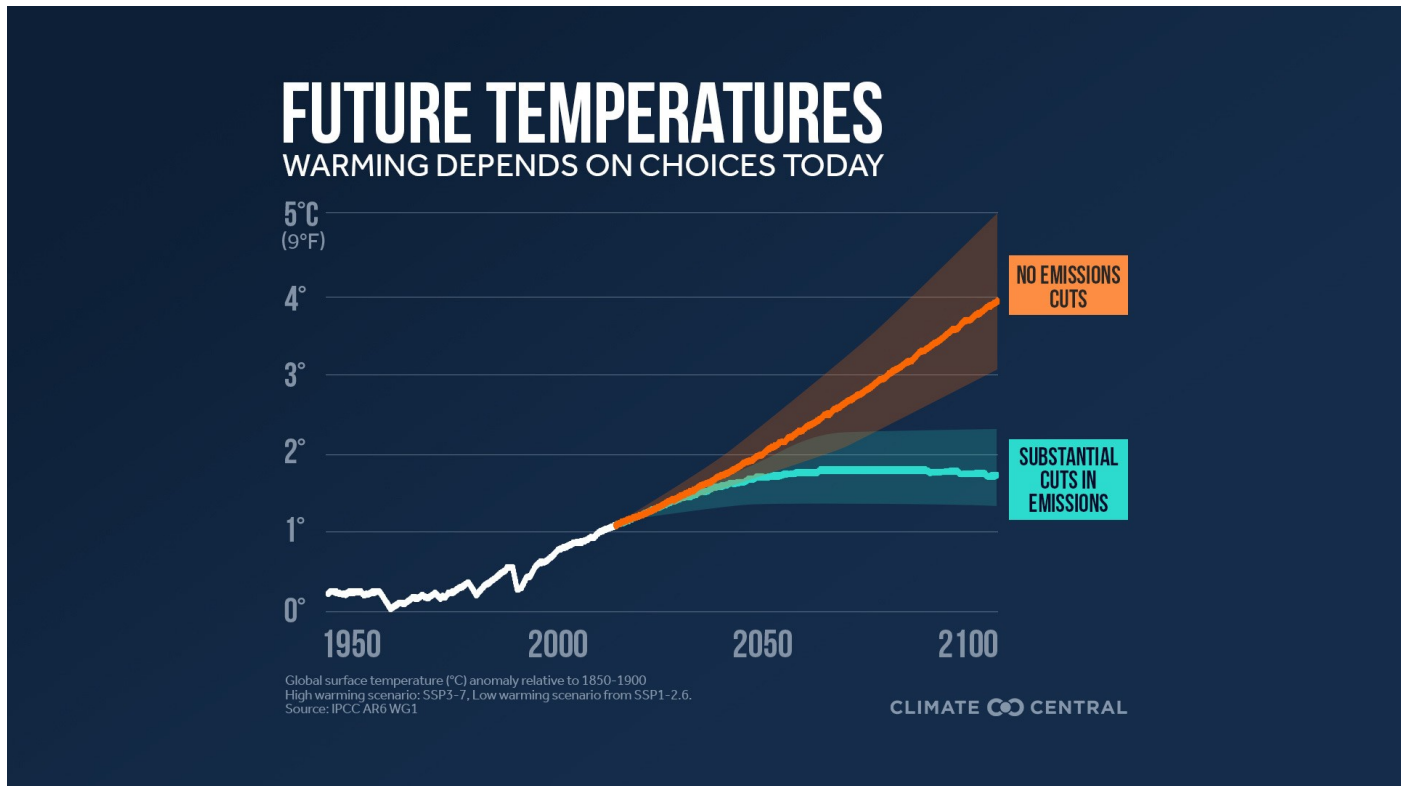


Image via Holly Abeels' article on a University of Florida blog [in August 2021](#)

I'm moving onto another topic: climate change and environmentalism. [BBC News reported](#) earlier this month the future of Pacific Islands tourism are "highly uncertain" with climate change. The islands, including Tuvalu, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, very vulnerable to rising waters. It was further reported that people in Fiji and the Cook Island (and likely in others, are a little bit fatalist, believing there isn't much that can be done, as it is "easily dismissed as a global problem that the Pacific Islands can't do much about," which made one researcher "surprised, to be honest, that people maybe feel a little bit helpless," with the idea they shouldn't talk about it. Maybe they see so much global inaction and realize not enough is being done...

Mother Jones reported that Dr. Kevin Roberts, president of the Heritage Foundation (and person behind Project 2025), [declared](#) that the so-called "climate agenda" (it doesn't exist) is worse than climate change! Other articles in the same magazine [noted](#) the impact of extreme weather on attitudes of voters toward climate change, with an increase in concern about preventing extreme weather but from "moderate and right-leaning Democrats" and conservative votes but not from "moderate and left-

leaning Republicans,” while *more* conservative voters said climate change isn’t happening! Other articles noted:

- the biggest fans of solar energy [are underestimating it](#)
- the [possibility](#) of “eating our way” out of a climate crisis
- Project 2025 aiming to kill federal subsidies [for carbon removal projects](#)
- Indigenous activists [not forgetting](#) Tim Walz’s Promises to oppose Line 3 pipeline but *letting* it go forward once he got in office
- a [report](#) by Climate Rights International [showing](#) wealthy nations (like Australia, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK, and the U.S.) that are stifling climate protest while “shaming others for the same”

With that, I am shifting to the next part of this newsletter, which focuses on LGBTQ+ people and issues. The best recent news is not [the release](#) of the new season of *Arcane* in November, nor [shared carework](#) in polyamorous families, but the [comic book](#), entitled *Battle of Jakku — Republic Under Siege 2* [featuring](#) wild lesbian archaeologist Doctor Chelli Lona Aphra.

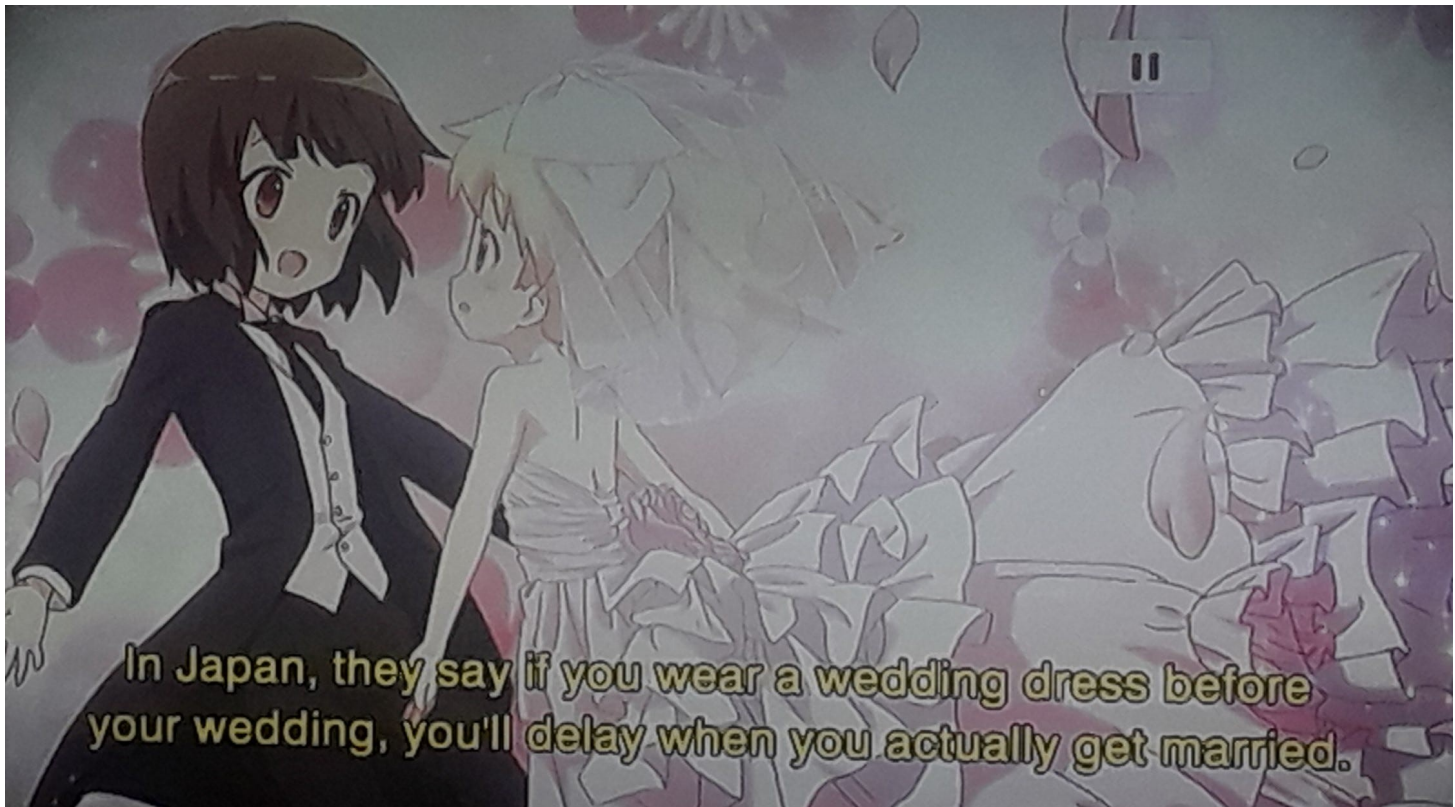
Her two comic series, one which ran from December 2016 to December 2019 (by Kieron Gillen), and the other from May 2020 to January 2024 (by Alyssa Wong), have sadly ended. I hope [this appearance](#) by Aphra is hinting toward [something more](#) in the [future](#). If you haven’t read the aforementioned series, I’d highly recommend it, even if you don’t know much about Star Wars.

While I wasn’t sure at first, I am *definitely* sure now that she is my *top* Star Wars [character](#). I can’t think of many other characters who compete apart from Sabine Wren and Ahsoka Tano. If you are interested in knowing *why* that is the case, I recommend you read articles [here](#) and [here](#), to give two examples. I would say that with the [cancellation](#) of *The Acolyte*, which I noted in my last newsletter, having characters like Aphra is a good step toward creating [a safe space](#) for *new* Star Wars fans. Also see [here](#) for info about upcoming Star Wars comics.

Other posts focused on:

- the best LGBTQ+ movies [of 2022](#)
- making queer friends [in a new city](#)
- [LGBTQ+ resources](#) at the Library of Congress
- [overwhelming](#) opposition to anti-trans laws from Americans
- [gender variance](#) around the world
- 15 trans and nonbinary [rising stars](#)

- [an interview](#) with Molly Knox Ostertag
- [pansexual myths](#)
- LGBTQ+ people being mistreated [at work](#)
- [misconceptions](#) about polyamorous relationships
- the [best](#) queer romance novels.



One of my favorite moments from Kinmoza, also known as Kin-iro Mosaic. This was taken on my phone from the Blu-ray player a while back, so it might be a bit crooked. So, sorry about that. I still recommend this series though.

I am shifting again to another topic: anime. *The Yuri Empire* had reviews of note on: [The Girl in Twilight](#), [World Dai Star](#), [Tokyo Mew Mew New](#), [Ippon Again](#), [Otaku Elf](#), [The Magical Revolution of Reincarnated Princess and the Genius Young Lady](#), and the [yuri ASMR show](#). Otherwise, there were articles on the following:

- *Delicious in Dungeon* season 2 [production update](#)
- the [best anime](#) twenty years ago
- Crunchyroll [licensing](#) Bocchi the Rock! compilation films
- [summer visual](#) for Skip and Loafer
- anime style [of Scott Pilgrim Takes Off](#)

- summer anime flipping the script on familiar [themes](#)

I'm so happy to see that *Senpai is an Otokonoko* anime adaptation is getting [a film continuation](#) entitled *Senpai wa Otokonoko: Ame Nochi Hare*, and *The Dangers in My Heart* [getting a compilation film](#) likely to be released some time next year. I enjoy both of those series for different reasons.

Others wrote about topics such as:

- their top ten favorite anime [of 2022](#)
- overpowered characters [in anime](#)
- [redefining](#) the Gundam legacy in *The Witch from Mercury*
- [the first](#) three episodes of *RWBY: Ice Queendom*
- queerness [and neurodivergence](#) in *Yuri is My Job!*
- possession and performance [in *Spice and Wolf*](#)
- the best romance anime [for new fans](#)
- the [accidental](#) trans narrative in *Ranma 1/2*
- [an analysis](#) of yuri readership and demographics
- self-definition and independence [in *Kiki's Delivery Service*](#)
- queer media [escapism and self-discovery](#) in *Sasaki and Miyano*
- reading *The Duke of Death and His Maid* as a [disability allegory](#)

While there were many other articles, but one I'd like to point to is the three-episode check-in of summer 2024 [by Anime Feminist editors](#). I did not agree with what they said about *VTuber Legend: How I Went Viral after Forgetting to Turn Off My Stream* as I was more critical of it, and didn't watch enough of *Alya Sometimes Hides Her Feelings in Russian* (I dropped it) or *Makeine: Too Many Losing Heroines!* (I dropped it) nor did I watch *Dahlia in Bloom: Crafting a Fresh Start with Magical Tools*, *ATRI -My Dear Moments-*, and *Twilight Out of Focus*. However, I agreed with what they said about *Senpai is an Otokonoko*, *NareNare -Cheer for You!-* (I am a bit more positive on this show), and *MAYONAKA PUNCH* (I wish the ending had been *more* queer).

With that, I am switching gears once more to: Western animation. The most heartbreaking (and recent) news was [recently](#) shared by Molly Knox Ostertag, the talented animation writer and cartoonist who is the wife of ND Stevenson (known as creator of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*), on [her Substack](#) and Twitter, in [a thread](#). Disney had decided, a few months ago, to cancel *Neon Galaxy*! Early reports had stated that the series would be centered on a trans princess. While she didn't mention this,

specifically, in her post, she did say, this in part, sharing only what *she* made but not what anyone else had done:

I want to talk about an animated TV show called Neon Galaxy that I pitched and began developing at a large animation studio in late 2019. A few months ago, after over four years of development, **I learned that it wouldn't be moving forward**. I mourned, vented, and did all the things one does to get over that weird feeling of creative loss...I realized recently that I had this sense of guilt towards the characters, like I owed them something. They had become real to me over those four and a half years, but they never got to see the light of day...if you knew these girls, **you'd know how much they love the spotlight**...There's a lot I can't share [such as] designs by other people far more talented than myself, two minutes and forty-three seconds of gorgeous animation, a fully voice-acted and scored animatic, and several incredible songs by BETTY freaking WHO...My favorite thing about this project was getting to assemble a dream team of collaborators...I'm not entirely sure why I'm sharing these...[but] the idea of those characters being **locked away** in a company's archives, gathering dust, does not sit right with me...For now, this is a farewell. **Maybe one day I'll be back**...To me, Neon Galaxy was always about collaboration and the magic that comes when people work together...Animation lends itself to making entire worlds full of characters, life, and music. Every one of the hundreds of hands that touch a show or movie brings something new and vital...it's a weird, bad time in animation right now....**I'll never know for sure** why Neon Galaxy...was killed...As the Animation Guild meets with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) to negotiate a new contract...I hope they can win gains that make it possible for us to tell good, interesting, out-of-the-box stories again within the studio system...if studios continue to axe shows while underpaying and abusing creators and artists...we will simply find ways to tell our stories **without them**...no matter what, people will never stop making and caring about art.

The series, set in the distant future, would have centered on two girls, Coral and Amber, who live on an asteroid with their dad, and talented singer Coral wants to start a band, which her drum-playing sister, Amber joins, calling it Neon Galaxy. They later meet Blu (who plays every instrument) and fashion designer Indigo, who join her band. They face rivals, like celebrity Gleam and boy band F8. There were supportive messages from fans, and others, such as [her wife](#), ND, story director [Sam](#)

[King](#), illustrator [Rebekka Dunlap](#), background artist [Nessa Tweneboah](#), animation writer [Brandon Hoàng](#), and [others](#).

Is Riley LGBTQ+ in Inside Out 2? Sapphic Twitter detectives certainly think so

Jun 07 • Written by [Sophie Perry](#)

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One of the first articles I read in *Pink News* which claimed this might be a “reality” in the film, with this theory shown to be incorrect. Since I disagree with that outlet is [doing with approaching trans issues \(and more\)](#), I’m not going to link to the article here, but you can easily find it in a simple search.

If this news wasn’t bad enough, it was disturbing to hear about the extreme lengths that executives went to make Riley Andersen, protagonist of *Inside Out 2* (and *Inside Out*) less gay, including changes to lighting and tone in scenes where Valentina “Val” Ortiz (an older girl voiced by Lilimar Hernandez) and Riley appeared together. This was described by one former Pixar employee as lots of extra work so that no one could see them, potentially, as “not straight.” Other former Pixar employees [told IGN](#), in the same article, that some executives were “uncomfortable” with LGBTQ themes in the film. Otherwise, one reviewer [felt queer-baited](#) by the post-credits scene of the film. [Another](#) said that sexuality is not mentioned, *at all*, in the film. Prior to this, as I noted in [my May newsletter](#), some fans believed that Riley would be gay in the film (at the time I said “I see *why* people see this, but I doubt Disney will commit to it”).

Even after the film's release, [some believed](#) there was canonical support for saying Riley is gay. Following the *IGN* article, I was reticent to watch the film on Disney+. I did watch it and it focuses a *lot* on mental health. I do think if Riley was gay and Val being a negative influence on her could have been an issue, but... I still think they *could* have made her actually fall in love with Val (as it is implied in the film) and not much would have to be changed, to be honest.

In more positive news, a *Carmen Sandiego* game [was announced](#), which is a new [adaptation](#) of sorts, [from](#) the animated series which sadly ended in January 2021, after beginning in January 2019, and will be released in 2025. Other than that, there were articles about the [AfroAmerican summit](#) and the [debut date](#) of the *Inside Out* spinoff entitled *Dream Productions* as December 11th. Unfortunately, Disney [is cracking down](#) on password sharing, along with Netflix, on accounts “accessed by individuals living outside of the primary Disney+ residence” and only one extra member slot “is available per account.” Yikes! This will *be bad* for those using either streaming service to watch animation.

With that, I come to the final part of this newsletter, which brings in topics which I couldn't write about anywhere else. That includes:

- Biden's [ode to perpetual war](#) in his speech to the U.N. General Assembly (because of course)
- a review of Robert Dickins' *Cobweb of Trips: A Literary History of Psychedelics*, [which came](#) out this year
- a [massive amount](#) of money for the U.S. military
- A.I. surveillance [as a tool](#) of state repression
- how Memphis [became](#) a “battleground over Elon Musk's xAI supercomputer”
- the U.S. military prepping for “various scenarios, from a major terrorist attack [to civil unrest and violence](#)”

Other than this, there are articles on an announced crossover [between](#) *Gravity Falls*, *The Owl House*, and *Amphibia*, Russia's first secret influence campaign ([getting](#) the U.S. to buy Alaska, a huge illegal bribery scheme to convince Congress to go for this wild purchase), [a global history](#) of psychedelics, [how](#) the military won the recent presidential debate, and Google facing a new antitrust trial [after a ruling](#) “declaring search engine a monopoly.”

As for *The Nib*, they had illustrations on, topics including:

- [chemistry](#) of your favorite drinks
- less historical monuments [of London](#)

- caring for your “[geriatric millennial](#)”
- the [tipping point](#)
- [affordable](#) housing options
- [Kentucky’s](#) last abortion clinic

As you can probably see from this newsletter, I’ve decided to cut down on the number of links and to write *more* about certain topics, so as to ensure I can hopefully publish newsletters monthly, instead of getting bogged down in going through a wall of links. I have also tried to put sections where I *do* list links in bulleted form, which makes it easier. That’s all for this newsletter. Until next time!

– Burkely